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(Rule 25.)

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB.

AN ADVENT SACRAMENTAL ADDRESS DELIVERED AT EATON
CHAPEL ON SUNDAY MORNING, DEC. 3rd, 1871.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL MINTON, M.A.

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.”—REV. xix. 7.

THE Bride of Christ, the Lamb's wife, is the Elect Church, which was loved with an everlasting love, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, redeemed by Him at the time—appointed of the Father, and at last to be glorified with Him, and abide with Him for ever.

It is quite a mistake to speak of believers as going to glory when they die. Their perfected spirits do indeed go to be with Christ, and enjoy communion with Him and with one another. They rest from their labours, and look forward with joy and hope to the time when they *will be* glorified by the resurrection of their bodies in the likeness of His glorious body. But their glorification will take place at once, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when the dead shall be raised incorruptible and the living shall be changed.

That union with Christ in resurrection glory is here called “the marriage of the Lamb.” At present the Church is only betrothed to Him, and being adorned for Him. The fact is known to Him, and was always known. It is also being made known by the Spirit in due time to its various members. Christ manifests Himself unto them as He does not unto the world; He makes His abode with them, comes in to them, and sups with them, and they with Him. The Spirit itself bears witness with their spirits that they are the children of God, and if children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. But this can be known to others only by the visible fruit which it produces in their lives; and the genuineness of that fruit is often denied by those around them. Apart from the inconsistencies which too often mar its beauty and throw a doubt over its reality, it is notorious that the very brightest saints have often been reviled, slandered, and excommunicated, condemned as hypocrites, and counted as the offscouring of all things. Can this go on for ever? Impossible. Creation is described as waiting and longing

for "the manifestation of the sons of God," the making up of the jewels which Christ has been shaping and polishing each for its own place in His mediatorial crown, or, according to the figure here, for the recognition of His chosen bride in the public marriage which will take place when they meet together in the air.

Now St. Paul attributes the preparation of the Church for that great solemnity to Christ Himself. Eph. v. 25—27. Here, on the other hand, the bride is said to have "*made herself* ready." But that the two statements are in no way inconsistent is shown by their being put together in Isaiah lxi. 10: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." The fact is, that no metaphor can be pressed beyond a certain point. It must always be confined to the particular aspect of Divine truth which it is meant to illustrate. An earthly bride prepares or adorns *herself* for her husband. But the bride of Christ is adorned by Him, and instead of being presented to Him by another at the time of her marriage, He presents her to Himself, a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. It is therefore equally appropriate to speak of it, according to the human illustration as here,—according to the reality, as Paul does,—or according to both, as in the language of Isaiah.

But in what consists the Bride's readiness? There are some who understand it to consist in the actual expectation of Christ's coming by those members of His Church who are then alive on the earth. Such a view, however, would confine the adorning of the Bride to a very small fraction of her members; as the vast majority of them will have left this world long before, and, in most cases, without having had the slightest expectation of the Advent occurring in their lifetime. It is also inconsistent with a subsequent statement, which represents the glorified Church as "coming down," that is, after the marriage, "as a bride adorned for her husband." The preparing, making ready, adorning, must be the imparting of some essential qualification which belongs to the whole Church, and which

continues in unimpaired beauty after she has been glorified with Christ. In fact, it includes everything, from first to last, that was necessary to fit each member of the Church for its appointed place in the body. Some things they all require alike. They all need the same atoning blood, the same justifying righteousness, the same sanctifying spirit. In other things—no two of them need exactly the same preparation, because no two of them are to fit into exactly the same place. In one sense there is neither Jew nor Greek, male or female, rich or poor, bond or free; but in another sense there are endless distinctions. They make no difference in our relationship to the Head, all being vitally united to Him and absolutely dependent on Him. But they do make a vast difference in the moulding of our several characters, and will help to produce that indefinite variety which is as needful to the perfection of the Church as its essential unity is to the existence of it.

When the whole work has been completed the Bride will be ready. When the last saint has learnt the last lesson from God's Word, fought the last battle with the prince of darkness, put forth the last effort of faith and patience, performed the last act of love, and offered the last sacrifice of prayer and praise that were needed to perfect him, the trumpet will sound, and the Bridegroom will appear. When the last stone has received the last finishing touch from the hammer, the axe, or the chisel, that was wanting to fit it for its place in the spiritual temple of God, the "mystic fabric" will arise in its beauty, and the glory of the Lord will fill it.

Yes, the glory of the Lord. For though the Bride is said to have made herself ready, the song of triumph leaves us in no doubt as to the real Author of all her adornment. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to *Him*." Honour enough she will have, no doubt, even the highest honour that ever has been or ever will be bestowed upon any creature; but it is His honour that will be reflected in her; it is His name she will bear, His kingdom she will rule; and every member of the glorious band will cast his crown before the throne, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing?" Who can imagine the transports of joy, the triumphant

hallelujahs which will burst forth, not only from the Bride herself, but from the whole creation, when it is “delivered from the bondage of the corruption, into the liberty of the glory, of the sons of God. Heaven and earth will combine to say, “Let us be glad and rejoice.”

And is not this the spirit in which we should celebrate the feast that was meant, among other things, to be a symbol of “our gathering together unto Him?” Surely there should be no sackcloth and ashes, no mourning and fasting, no bowing down our heads as a bulrush, when we meet around the Lord’s table. We show forth His death, it is true; but not as if He were still dying, or still dead. We show forth a death that has passed into life, a decease that was accomplished once for all, and that was followed by resurrection and ascension. We are to *rejoice* in the Lord *always*, to glory in the cross of Christ; and the Lord’s Supper should help us to do this, not only by reminding us of our present union with Him, but also by quickening our anticipation of the great gathering at the marriage supper of the Lamb. These little gatherings of two or three in His name are intended to help us on our way “till He come.” And what a comfort it is to think that every communion received in faith, as well as everything else that tends to develope the life of Christ within us, everything done, suffered, attempted for Him, every aspiration after more perfect conformity to His image, is a step in that process which has been going on so long, and which cannot now be far from completion—even the adorning of the mystical Bride for her Divine Lord!

May every one of us be looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God. May not one of us be “left” when the Church is “taken”—left, either in our graves with “the rest of the dead,” or on earth amongst those enemies of righteousness who would not have Christ to reign over them. May not one of our voices be missing from the heavenly choir when the great hallelujah resounds—“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.”

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